

BOOK NOTICE

Beautiful Peonies

JOSEF J. HALDA and JAMES W. WADDICK (Botanical Illustrations by Jarmila Haldová). 2004. **The Genus Paeonia**. (ISBN 0-88192-612-4, hbk.). Timber Press, Inc. 133 S.W. Second Ave, Suite 450, Portland, OR 97204-3527, U.S.A. (Orders: www.timberpress.com, mail@timberpress.com, 503-227-2878, 1-800-327-5680, 503-227-3070 fax). \$34.95, 228 pp., 36 watercolors and 43 line drawings, 8 x" x 11".

The Genus Paeonia by Josef J. Halda with James W Waddick, botanical illustrations by Jarmila Haldová, presents 36 watercolor paintings depicting the peony. Simply put, botanical art is a mixture of science and art. The more balanced the mix, the higher the chance of success. The 22 color portraits here by book illustrator Jarmila, succeed more as art than science.

Grand flowers, dramatically lit, are posed against sophisticated taupe backgrounds. As art, the works are beautiful and haunting. The papery quality of the petals is convincing. The dark colored peonies so saturated in color as to appear satin-like. Veining on leaves is captured in rich detail. Delicate hairs on stems a virtuoso handling of the brush. But an inconsistent light source that cast bright to almost white coloring on flowers yet placed no shadow at all on some stems and leaves, disappointed. Given the rigid standards of botanical drawing, better to abandon dramatic lighting altogether and spend all available time on the accuracy of the live plant specimen placed in front of you. An uncomfortable shortening of leaves and twisting of some flower heads to fit the formatting of the paper resulted in perspective issues. Ideal positioning of flower placement on paper should be studied before the start of the drawing. While not strict botanical renderings of peonies, these are stunning portraits of peonies lovely enough to frame.

In addition to the color paintings in *The Genus Paeonia*, are 43 stunning black and white line and stipple drawings. These are sure and confident. Coolly devoid of illustrative styling. The perfect mix of art and science.—Cynthia Padilla, Botanical Arts Instructor, 9760 Mixon Dr., Dallas, Texas 75220, U.S.A. (214) 351-3447 ph/fx, Email padillacasa@juno.com. *Cynthia Padilla* popular instructor for universities, arboretums, garden and plant societies, travels extensively researching art and nature. Available for research projects, commissioned plant portraits, workshops and a travel leader on sketching tours. Her art is available for exhibit.